DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 204 502 CE 029 267

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TITLE CEU: Founding Principles, Experiences to Date and Future Prospects.
PUB DATE 19 May 81
NOTE 39p.: Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Council on the Continuing Education Unit (3rd, Chicago, IL, June 8, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Records; *Adult Education; Adults; College Credits; *Continuing Education; *Continuing Education Units; Definitions; Educational History; Educational Philosophy; Educational Planning; *Enrollment; *Higher Education

ABSTRACT

The continuing education unit (CEU) is a means of establishing some quantification of the myriad of offerings labeled "continuing education," "adult education," "lifelong learning," etc., supplied by a variety of institutions and agencies and participated in by an ever-increasing number and variety of persons. On its most fundamental level, the CEU is defined as the equivalent of 10 hours of learner participation in the classroom recitation mode of instruction. The CEU applies to the entire gamut of noncredit educational enterprise regardless of audience, content, level, breadth (scope), depth (intensity), educational objective, or recognition purpose served. The incidence of award of CEU among institutions of higher education has increased by one million units per year over the four-year period ending June 30, 1980, with 6.5 million CEUs awarded in the 1979-80 year. However, 9.5 million of the 12.3 million registrations in noncredit programs conducted by institutions of higher education in that year were without benefit of CEU. In the future, it is hoped that more providers of continuing education, as well as more participants in such learning programs, will work to establish the recognition of the CEU for their courses. Such a move would aid in the universality and the transferability of recognition for knowledge acquired in continuing education courses. (KC)

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CEU: Founding Principles, Experiences to Date and Future Prospects

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Introduction

Continuing education has come of age in the United States in the era since World War II. For example, the antecedent of the continuing education programs now operational at The University of Wisconsin in the fields of engineering and management was the Engineering, Science, Management, War-Training Program, ESMWTP, federally funded in the course of World War II.

The emphasis in that era was upon such technical subjects as:

> blueprint reading, diesel mechanics, drafting, foremanship, industrial safety, motor vehicle fleet supervision, radio maintenance and servicing, refrigeration, sheet-metal fabrication and welding

Compare those prosiac titles with the esoteric subjects being offered broadly across the nation today under the aegis of continuing education:

> commercial and industrial thermography, hazardous waste management, laser system design, microprocessor interfacing, network methods of construction project management, photovoltaics, reliability, risk management, transactional analysis, zero-based planning and budgeting

The mobilization effort for WW II clearly represented a continuation of the first industrial revolution. What we have dealt with since then has been the second industrial revolution. Now we confront the transition to the postindustrial society.

The field of continuing education has expanded rapidly over the past several decades, not only in terms of the numbers of

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of people served but in the frequency of repeated learning experiences for the individual as well as in the importance of such alternative access to postsecondary education in the meeting of career and avocational goals. The continuing education unit is a logical outgrowth that is applicable to this burgeoning enterprise. We can no longer afford to discount or discard altogether the multiple purposes that continuing education now serves. Each of us is in a critical passage throughout four or more decades of adulthood. We cannot afford to be out of touch with the realities and the practicalities of exponential change.

NOTE: If you are not fully aware of the power of exponentiation, I would remind you that one dollar invested at six percent in the future of America at the time of Columbus would be worth $2.4 trillion today. This is a fair approximation of the size of the American economy. But not to worry if your ancestors weren't Italian: Better than 99 percent of that growth has occurred in this century and 70 percent of it has occurred since John Kennedy was inaugurated president just over 20 years ago.

Founding Principles Attending the Birth of the CEU

The following premises applied throughout the development period concerning the long overdue, much needed and useful educational innovation that is represented today by the CEU:

1. With apologies due to many existing organizations -- as in the example of a number of evening colleges in major urban areas that traditionally used identical terminology to describe their own programs -- the original task force on the CEU moved at an early date to appropriate the generic name, continuing education, to mean all forms and examples of postsecondary education that are not specifically oriented toward or applicable to a diploma or a degree.

2. Therefore, a universe of continuing education was defined out of the already existing smorgasbord of noncredit learning experiences that have grown immensely in this country in the post-WW II era and which is generally recognized today as an important segment of higher education. Indeed, this is the very activity in which many of us are engaged.

3. The various and alternative end products of that universe of continuing education represent one of the principal means by which the many constituencies or user groups being served today may obtain essential updating.

4. It is also in this same way that conscientious individuals can maintain themselves abreast of new knowledge generation and technological developments that are specifically applicable to each of the tens of thousands of career fields. Otherwise, technological obsolescence is the grim prospect for these persons just as it is for organizations, whole industrial sectors and, indeed, nations that do not maintain pace with the discoveries and uses of new science and technology.

5. So it is seen that continuing education exists more as a means of purveying education for updating purposes and for dealing with the continuously evolving state of the art than as means of gaining entry to any particular skill or profession in the first instance. Thus the distinction becomes more clear between:

a) Formal academic education that is offered for credit and therefore is oriented almost exclusively toward the earning of diplomas and degrees that tend to categorize the individual's position and status at the time of first hire and also have major long-term implications for the career prospects.

b) Continuing education, as defined under the appropriated terminology of Item 1, above, is oriented almost exclusively toward career and avocational interests with the purpose of serving more immediate objectives at hand in terms of making incremental improvements in the career position and status.

6. The relative content or knowledge transfer that is associated with the various continuing education activities, in which we all participate in one way or another, should be capable of measurement just as surely as anything that has existence in nature is capable of measurement in keeping with the philosophy of plain-born William Tomson, who later became known by a more noble name, and is credited with having said:

> When you cannot measure what you are speaking about, when you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meager and unsatisfactory kind; it may be the beginning of knowledge but you have scarcely in your thoughts advanced to the stage of science, whatever the matter may be.
>
> -- Lord Kelvin

7. The principal variables in the determination of the continuing education units associated with any viable noncredit learning experience are the tangibles:

a) The teaching or learning format with respect to the pace and effectiveness with which knowledge transfer is accomplished.

b) The time spent in the learning situation.

These parameters are like the length and width of a rectangle that define its area without regard to that which is enclosed by the specified area.

8. Related elements of viability to any noncredit learning experience, of course, include the somewhat less tangible and often implicit issues of:

a) The charter, history, academic integrity, intellectual honesty, professional stature, organizational degree of stability and the motivating factors applicable to the producer or sponsor of the educational opportunity.

b) The administrative and organizational skill with which the enterprise is conducted.

c) The qualifications and commitment to excellence of the instructional staff in fulfilling the teaching obligation.

d) The heightened sense of immediate importance and lasting value of the learning experience to the participant as afforded by the provider through the combination of Items a), b) and c), above.

9. At the same time, the measurement of the supposed learning benefits to the individual for participation in continuing education should be independent of such subjective matters as:

a) The source of sponsorship, among many alternatives, other than the requirements that the sponsor be duly chartered, organized and committed to the conduct of quality continuing education in keeping with Item a) in the paragraph above.

b) The subject matter presented within the accepted universe of postsecondary knowledge.

c) The particular audience served.

d) The level at which the subject matter is presented consistent with ability and comprehension of the audience.

e) The issue of breadth versus depth of presentation. That is to say, continuing education may be either very intensive or merely of a survey nature. This distinction depends upon the audience and purpose to be served.

f) The educational objective to be accomplished or the recognition purpose to be served for the particular audience being addressed through the learning opportunity.

g) The evaluation procedures that are applied, respectively, to the participants and the educational operation per se in terms of meeting the stated objectives of the learning experience.

h) The locale in which conducted.

i) The educational facilities used.

j) The financial arrangements to support the enterprise.

Vital Statistics Applicable to the CEU

1. In the light of these several basic assumptions, the substantive measure of continuing education hereinafter should be referenced meticulously and consistently in terms of "continuing education units." This is the genesis of the CEU. It is just that pure, simple and direct.

2. The continuing education unit, CEU, or simply "q," as applicable to all continuing education, is defined at its most fundamental level as . . .

> The equivalent of ten hours of learner participation in the classroom recitation mode of instruction.

3. In short, the continuing education unit applies to the entire gamut of noncredit educational enterprise regardless of audience, content, level, breadth (scope), depth (intensity), educational objective or recognition purpose served.

4. The rest is history, even if current and not yet fully evaluated history as eventually to be obtained through the test of time.

5. The opportunity before us now is to discuss how the continuing education unit, that has been purposefully defined in such simple and universally applicable terms, can become a part of continuing education that is offered in the service of career and avocational needs, interests and goals.

By-product Advantages of the CEU

Note that the use of the terminology, continuing education, avoids reference to "credit" versus "noncredit" as well as to the various other euphemistic devices that have been used in the past to avoid reference to "noncredit."

Recall with me the examples of "evening class," "extension course," "off-campus instruction," "credit-free opportunity," "lifelong learning," "open registration," "adult education," and "certificate program," among others, that have been used in the past to disguise, however thinly, the noncredit course.

The consistent use of "continuing education" and the "continuing education units" associated therewith puts the alternative universe of informal learning experiences in a positive perspective. The measures and the forms of recognition that derive from the two worlds of higher education are clearly distinct from this point forward. Each aim, credit and noncredit, serves a separate mission and purpose. At the same time, the two universes of education are now separately but equally capable of quantifying their activities performed as well as services rendered on behalf of their respective publics.

Relating Continuing Education to Needs

The design of sequences of noncredit learning experiences that lead to the recognition of individual participation in continuing education should be initially and largely a shared responsibility with the so-called "user groups" being served rather than solely the creation of the immediate providers of individual courses or even related course sequences. User groups include:

1. The various existing and aspiring careers and professions.
2. The several fields of study or disciplines that frequently exist within a given profession.
3. The larger number of professional and technical subject

4. Licensing boards, certificating agencies and commissions and their respective concerns that we see evolving today for re-licensure and recertification.

5. Employers through their recruitment activities, training functions and personnel departments.

6. Peer groups that have professional, cultural or avocational interests in kind.

7. Civic, service and community organizations.

The particular composition or configuration of the so-called "user group" depends entirely upon the purpose for which continuing education is to be recognized. Thus, any given individual may belong to a multiple number of "user groups" that are virtually unique to the individual interests and pattern of career pursuits and development.

> We should be reminded in this respect that there are 35,000 separate careers or job classifications recognized in this country today. These are apart from the cultural, avocational, fraternal, religious and civic callings in untold numbers to which we also may respond.

Rationale for the Universal Use of CEU

The particular logic behind the decision to defer to the respective judgments of user groups rather than to any one of the potential multitude of providers of continuing education when establishing the criteria for recognition and conferring reward is discussed below.

This is an age of growing dependence upon the related concepts of a lifetime of learning and the dedicated pursuit of self-renewal through every available means and particularly through

continuing education. It matters little whether these educational objectives are carried out exclusively for any of the following purposes:

1. The fulfillment of on-the-job requirements.
2. The mastery of a particular occupational or subject matter field in which one is engaged.
3. The acquisition of literacy or in-depth knowledge in a field where one aspires to become adept or otherwise engaged.
4. The sheer advancement in the understanding and application of knowledge in a recognized professional field.
5. The satisfaction of a community of interests in a cultural or avocational area of pursuit.

The greatest rationale for the continuing education unit is the ease and universality with which it may be applied to any of these purposes through already-existing programs of continuing education. The mere quantification of the knowledge transfer associated with an informal learning experience applies equally well to all such programs, although they may be as varied in their sources of sponsorship and the detailed attention given to individual accomplishment as they are broad in their choice of subjects and variety of formats and teaching methodologies.

At this stage of application of the CEU we cannot admit of "several different kinds" of continuing education any more than we can suggest there are "several different kinds" of education for academic credit. But each use to be made of continuing education through its attendant CEU is potentially unique, no matter how

broad the entire spectrum of choice may be. It is the combination of the multiplicity of choices available among continuing education offerings and the particularity of individual needs, in which the recognition purposes are often secondary, that accounts for the breadth. Specific examples of continuing education may be used to serve whatever unique purposes, particularly in the adult sector, that are not now being served by the diploma- and degree-oriented systems of education that operate from kindergarten through the doctoral degree.

It may be said further in defense of the CEU that it is easily and immediately capable of being applied at any recognizable level of continuing education. The lower threshold begins with immediate postsecondary education. Even remedial education at the secondary level should be considered to be acceptable as a point of entry to the universe of continuing education. These levels of education are applicable to large numbers of people in all walks of life. At the other limit of the continuing education spectrum, CEU may be applied with corresponding appropriateness and effectiveness to postdoctoral participation in highly specialized and individualized learning experiences that address the virtual outer limit of knowledge in the particular field.

These several pronouncements concerning the true nature of the CEU are:

a) comparatively simple in the saying;

b) only slightly more difficult in the understanding;

c) but require a full command of sense and reason in the application.

The Determination of CEU

In my view, the CEU also applies equally well for all formats of continuing education as long as there is a legitimate provider and a knowledgeable and responsible person associated with the organization and conduct of the learning experience. The validity and general acceptance of the system of measurement and recognition that follows upon the definition of CEU in a noncredit learning experience depends upon the skill and dedication of that responsible person in establishing the appropriate number of "q" to be attached to each program that is conducted. The person in charge of the learning experience, as the principal agent of the sponsoring organizations, is most intimately aware of the audience, purpose, content, level, breadth or scope, depth or intensity, extent of individual participation required, the methods of individual and course evaluation applied as well as any other significant educational parameters that are applicable to the particular case in hand.

All of these qualitative aspects of the learning experience are in addition to the format and duration that serve primarily to quantify the basic educational package in terms of CEU. In the criticism of CEU to date, the assumption has been that only the latter two parameters go into the educational package that is given a quantitative measure in terms of CEU.

Whenever highly informal circumstances and methodologies apply, the course director should be able to decide upon the equivalent number of hours that would be required in the conventional recitation mode of instruction to achieve the same general

degree of knowledge transfer. This task need be neither as difficult nor as uncertain as it may seem at first encounter. Experienced educators surely have the ability to judge the general amount of educational content associated with a typical recitation period or its multiple in terms of a standard quarter-hour or a semester-hour of creidt, as the case may be, in the academic mode of learning.

It is well to note in defense of the above argument that summer sessions in all manner and variety of construct and duration cause no apparent problem of credit-hour determination among our academic counterparts. Of even greater significance is the equanimity with which registrars accept credit hours from a wide variety of institutions and courses as well as learning experiences of various term lengths and degrees of rigor and exactitude. They do so just as if all such learning experiences that fit a given curriculum are identical in their worth when it is highly probable that they are not.

The course director of a continuing education experience is merely asked to apply this same judgmental skill as his academic counterparts when estimating the educational content of a particular program that is to be measured in CEU. This determination is to be made wholly independent of the obvious differences in the principal independent variables such as are influenced by the audience, purpose, content, etc. Continuing education simply has to be <u>appropriate to the need</u> wherein that consideration replaces

the curriculum that is inviolate in the application of academic credit. Once that criterion is satisfied, virtually everything else falls into place.

The same as with the source of sponsorship and the educational objective to be served, the CEU is also completely universal without regard to the level and the breadth-versus-depth aspect of the instructional content or the prior educational qualifications of the audience or user group for whom the learning experience is intended. Questions concerning the great number of factors and degree of variability tolerated among CEU, as influenced by the several educational parameters of audience, level, scope, intensity, content, format and purpose, all tend to wash out or otherwise answer themselves once the units are applied for recognition purposes. This flexibility and universality derives from the often-repeated truism:

The usefulness of the CEU is in the eye of the beholder.

One cannot conceive of a generic subject, such as Water Chemistry, being taught in the same way to: a) watch engineers in a power plant, b) canoe-borne monitors of environmental pollution in streams, c) skilled laboratory technicians and d) research scientists. Yet each participant in such variable offerings is deserving of CEU in his own right despite the fact that all four such offerings may bear the same title and source of sponsorship, but are distinguised from one another as to audience, content and purpose in the several respective instances.

This ability to serve all audiences, contents, levels, breadths, depths, formats and purposes is not particularly unique to the CEU. Indeed not, for the familiar concept of credit -- whether applied to elementary, secondary, undergraduate or graduate education and whether applied to language, science, social studies or physical education -- has long enjoyed similar universality in these several respects. Each credit offering is peculiarly adapted to its audience, purpose, content, etc. Thus, there are more parallels and precedents than one imagines, at first, with respect to the wide adoption and early use of CEU for recognition purposes in career fields.

The particular distinctions as to the so-called "curriculum" or "career requirements" and the pertinent issue of quality control that are applicable thereto are discussed below.

Multiple Sources of Sporsorship Permissible

The system of CEU now in use throughout the country permits a further innovation in the interest of continuing education by making such learning opportunities both more generally available and uniformly transferable from one repository of information to another. Thus, the system permits a great degree of latitude with respect to the possible sources of sponsorship and subsequent award of CEU. Opportunity is afforded for participation in continuing education enterprise by a vast array of potentially recognizable and acceptable providers, many of which are quite separate and apart from the traditional sources of so-called higher education.

The prospect exists for CEU to be made available through such varied sources as:

a) Publicly and privately supported institutions of higher education, including the traditional four-year colleges and universities as well as junior colleges, two-year centers, vocational, technical and adult education institutions, community colleges and the full spectrum of "extension," "outreach," "open universities" and "universities without walls."

b) Proprietary schools of various levels and types.

c) The recently emergent "learning" or "knowledge industry."

d) Media-based programs, in a variety of formats and options and from a multiplicity of sources.

e) Programmed, self-paced and independent or home study from various places of origin.

f) Hired consultants or instructional staffs in programs sponsored by various organizations.

g) Various organizations whose primary mission is that of training and development.

h) Professional cadres engaged in educational programming on a free-lance basis.

i) In-service training and on-the-job instruction as conducted by training departments and for "in-house" use.

j) In-plant programs as taught by retained personnel.

k) The educational committee activities of associations, civic clubs, professions and technical societies.

l) Church, library and public school programs offered at the community or neighborhood level.

m) Self-taught experiences that can be reasonably and properly evaluated and later attested to by either a willing sponsor or a concerned "user," etc.

n) The recently perceived role of publishers of books, magazines and journals in purveying coutinuing education directly to the individual consumer and, many times over, to every conceivable construct of the many user groups to which that individual may belong.

It may be reasonably expected that each of these potential sources of sponsorship carries out a program of continuing education to the best of its ability and in response to its own constituency, organizational purpose, specific training mission and educational objectives. Who is to quarrel with that approach to an educational mission or with the CEU each bona fide sponsoring organization offers in conjunction with its learning opportunities through continuing education?

Moreover, the ultimate test of the marketplace is a second line of defense against unqualified and indiscriminate operators in the field. To find a "use" for CEU can be a self-policing aspect of this development. If there is no user group to place credence in a particular noncredit learning experience, the CEU associated with it simply must lie fallow until and unless acceptance is eventually obtained in some sector of the marketplace. CEU standing alone have virtually no meaning. It is only the CEU that can contribute to individual development and subsequent recognition that take on lasting importance apart from the mere happenstance of their being a concomitant part of viable and reputable continuing education.

Current Levels of Use

The incidence of award of CEU among institutions of higher education has increased by one million units per year over the four-year period ending June 30, 1980, with 6.5 million CEU awarded in the 79-80 year. This rate of growth compares with

individual registrations that have been growing at nearly the same rate over the same four years, and which now stand at 12.3 million per year.

The data show that the 6.5 million CEU were earned on the basis of 2.8 million registrations, for an average of 2.3 CEU per resistration. It is sobering to me if, perhaps, not to this audience that the same data also show that 9.5 million, or 77 percent, of the registrations in noncredit programs conducted by the institutions of higher education in the year 79-80 were without benefit of CEU. We can only speculate whether or not these were the less meaningful learning opportunities when compared with the 2.8 million participants who earned CEU. These numbers -- as are to be made available more officially and in more detail from the National Center for Educational Statistics yet this summer -- represent but one leg of a pedestal of three or more legs relative to the current standing of the CEU. Specifically:

1. While the numbers reported above indicate a positive trend with respect to both continuing education and the CEU, the figures on either score are very general estimates at best and not precision counts. Their use should be more for dead reckoning than for precision navigation. The fine-line distinctions are nevertheless unimportant -- even as will be pointed out in more detail later -- as long as there is a strong and growing trend with respect to the two positives from this perspective: continuing education and CEU.

2. The above numbers do not report upon the many other categories of organizations -- both public and private as well entirely apart from the institutions of higher education -- which are currently

engaged in or are otherwise capable of providing continuing education with the concurrent award of CEU. While 2,285 institutions of higher education contributed to the sample and 1,234 of that number currently award CEU, these numbers remain small in comparison with the total number of organizations that conceivably could become engaged in these practices. An even greater indication of the vacuum that still exists relative to the CEU is represented by the fact that while significantly more than one-half of the institutions of higher educadtion now award CEU, there must be but a small fraction, indeed, of all other eligible providers who are currently so engaged.

3. The third great distinction in this recitation of supposed "current practices" is that virtually none of the millions of CEU of record have taken on any further meaning or importance in the absence of follow-on recognition programs that are based on the accumulation of CEU of appropriate kind as one of the criteria of individual worth for recognition or advancement. This matter of "putting CEU to use" stands before all of us today as unmet need equal to the more fundamental problem of quantifying continuing education in the first place, the illogical and untenable condition that existed before the CEU was conceived.

An Allegory

The recent orbital flight of Columbia I, the space shuttle, presents me opportunity for an allegory to the present circumstance concerning the CEU. Shakespeare, in The Tempest, wrote: "What is past is prologue."

1. Permit me to liken the agency that is represented by NASA to the proponents of the CEU or, if you please, to this organization and its predecessor task force.

2. The great aerospace industry that is capable of NASA's prime contracting represents the literally tens of thousands existing or would-be providers of CEU or, if you please, this audience and the tens of thousands of other organizations eventually capable of awarding CEU.

3. The flight of Columbia I is representative of a continuing education learning experience for which no recognition purpose is served.

4. Notice that there was no payload or purpose for the mission other than the test flight itself.

5. The comparable circumstance in continuing education has been referred to as "empty 'q'," just as the cargo hold of Columbia I was empty.

6. So it stands with most CEU today. They exist. They have capability. But that which is lacking is the "mission" or "end purpose" for their existence.

7. Here I have reference to the recognition programs among user groups of every kind that can only be improved by the incorporation of meaningful continuing education into their requirements for individual advancement, reward or recognition.

8. Just as "the working age of space activity" now looms potentially before us, so can CEU now begin to work more effectively in contributing toward recognition programs in proper proportion to the worth of continuing education in the advancement of one's career.

The Acceptance of CEU Is Vested with Users

The CEU may seem so universally available and applicable at this stage of its development that it would appear, at first, to be in danger of losing all of its intended meaning. This could become a concern before the unit has had an opportunity to gain wide acceptance and use. However, a second major innovation that is believed to be peculiarly applicable with respect to the CEU is that it is intended to have merit or utility only in such instances that it meets the needs or specification of a particular

user group in society at large. Therefore, each potential user group should view the CEU of record solely in terms of its suitability for use among its own clientele. The learning experience may serve either the purpose of advancing the level of the group or that of imparting essential new information which is related to the functions or responsibilities of the group.

There are very large numbers and varieties of so-called user groups extant in the country at any given time for whom the concept of the CEU has potential use. Each of these user groups has its own membership requirements and continuing education objectives. Thus, the opportunity is ever present for the evaluation of continuing education opportunities by these groups either before or after the fact of their conduct. Particularly, their involvement is to be recommended through the planning phase as well as by monitoring the execution of the learning opportunity when it is conducted. Judgments are readily capable of being rendered by user groups on the basis of whether or not any given CEU is pertinent to their immediate needs. Very few judgmental values of other nature need become involved insofar as bringing the CEU to bear in the marketplace is concerned.

This on-the-spot determination of the merit of a given CEU in the service of a particular need is in sharp contrast with the detailed procedures that take place, largely before the fact, for accreditation by peer groups where academic credit is concerned. As a matter of fact, whenever a form of accreditation is applied to continuing education, it should have little or no significance

in the marketplace where specific user groups are concerned. This is due to the requirement in the world of work for timeliness of the subject matter as well as to the faithfulness of the execution in terms of reaching a stated objective in the interest of meeting a well-identified need of a specific audience.

Continuous Evaluation and Development of Curricula

Informal curricula built in terms of CEU may be infinitely varied and just as easily capable of updating in the service of the changing needs and interests of any user group. Institutional accreditation of CEU is not necessary under the clear separation of interest and function between the providers of continuing education and the user groups they serve, as has been set forth above. The latter groups are usually more interested in the offering than the offerer. User groups may be expected to accept or reject the attendant CEU largely on the basis of whether or not the offering fits their need. Assuming that all other course parameters are met, the source of the CEU is of secondary importance in the matter of fulfilling the spectrum of learning experiences and objectives that various user groups require.

Meanwhile, the provider should concentrate upon the quality and aptness of the offerings as they relate to the audience, content and purpose served. It is not necessary or appropriate for the provider to be concerned about the uses to which CEU are to be put at some later time. Hiring, promotion, transfer, licensure, membership, awards, etc., are not the concerns of providers of

continuing education insofar as I can imagine. Those issues are properly the concerns of user groups with whom the subject individual is associated in the particular context for which recognition is sought.

Neither should the provider of continuing education engage in the structure of an artificial curriculum without the concurrence of a user group that is to be served. Whenever such solo exercises are engaged in, the artificial construct must be held to in virtual blind allegiance. Otherwise, the would-be provider must seek to modify the curriculum structure with considerable difficulty simply to meet a changing circumstance that affects current practice in the career field. Either way the curriculum fails in its purpose. This is not to deny the importance of or the worth in curricula that lead to degrees or unique forms of certification, particularly if they meet those needs on a sustained basis commensurate with the "shelf life" of the curriculum.

Multiple Providers Permitted

Therefore, a multiple array of providers of continuing education from the listing, a) through n), page 15 of this paper, is permitted in the achievement of any given recognition program under this scheme. The primary objective of a continuing education offering is to meet the educational goals of an individual or of the particular organization with whom the individual is affiliated and which organization sits in judgment of the subject person's progress. The ready accumulation of individual records from a large number of providers and over time and place barriers

are other attributes of the CEU system as conceived and instituted to date.

Provider Responsibilities Are Limited

Meanwhile, the additional burdens imposed upon the provider of the continuing education experience are minimal as a consequence of adapting to the CEU mode. The qualifications to become a recognized provider of continuing education include:

1. Some form of license, charter or authority to engage in continuing education activities for the audience and subject of record.
2. A substantial degree of subject matter expertise for all continuing education programs conducted.
3. A commitment to establish and maintain a readily accessible and transportable individual record concerning the award of CEU.

Notice that the provider of continuing education generally does not attest to the fitness of the individual to perform any particular societal function following a brief acquaintanceship in the course of individual participation in a program of continuing education. This passive nature of the recognition conferred almost incidentally in terms of CEU of record contrasts very sharply with the provider's obligation when conferring a diploma or a degree.

The qualifications of a holder of a diploma or a degree are generally accepted at face value by society at large on the strength of the sponsor's recommendation and, more importantly, reputation. Some important aspects of the provider's reputation are carried by

the holder of a diploma or degree in that individual's first encounter with the outside world. This event follows several years of sheltered existence in which the sole judge of individual merit has been the educational system through which that person has progressed. There is no discounting the importance of the trust that has been built up in society over the centuries with respect to educational qualifications as evilenced by the diploma or degree or record.

On the other hand, the same or a similar provider of an educational opportunity cannot attest to individual fitness via continuing education except for that small portion of any individual's lifetime of learning that happens to come under the given provider's immediate purview. Meanwhile, all other individual attributes for recognition fall outside of the typical provider's ken as well as areas of authority and responsibility. These facts, alone, suggest that the institution or organization from which continuing education is received has only a minor role to play in terms of individual recognition beyond the diploma or the degree.

Full-time Equivalents, FTE, from CEU

A by-product of the threshold level of effort required of the provider of continuing education relative to the award of CEU is that there now is a common denominator of reasonable rigor around which faculty loads, use of facilities, and a determination of the number of full-time-equivalent students, FTE, may be evaluated. Instructional costs and other budgetary parameters may be programmed and compared on a unit or FTE basis. These

determinations may be made not only within and among various sources of sponsorship of continuing education but in comparison with their formal education counterparts as well.

More User Acceptance Now Needed

The labor of love relative to the packaging of continuing education programs in terms of CEU will be paid off when this module becomes the norm for recognition purposes among user groups. But the uniform module of continuing education simply had to come into common use before recognition programs could be built, in part, upon the accumulation of such modules in an organized pattern of learning. Nevertheless, there is little long-term incentive for the packaging and recording of CEU simply in terms of its public service aspects or its measure of FTE. There must be an end-product use of the CEU in terms of recognition being conferred upon individuals for their participation in programs of continuing education that serve to build a new level of competency among those who amass the associated CEU.

The responsibility for making use of CEU is held by the user groups to which the participants in continuing education happen to belong and from which they either seek recognition or are required to demonstrate a minimum level of effort at learning and renewal. We are now at that critical transitional stage in the acceptance of CEU by user groups for their contribution to individual worthiness for such recognition or reward each user group is capable of conferring upon individuals.

Thus, greater user awareness is needed at this time to create a demand for the award and recognition of CEU by the great body of providers operating in the several sectors as represented only in part by the present membership in CCEU. Support for and use of the CEU should be manifested at this time to match more closely the interest and effort of the now hundreds, and soon thousands, of providers who offer their continuing education programs to the public in the CEU mode with greater or lesser degrees of entrepreneurship.

This latter effort of developing an effective mechanism of demand among potential users of CEU can be brought about more quickly if members among the community of providers would offer to help the user groups they serve in establishing goals and achievement standards that are appropriate to the need, responsibilities and aspirations of their respective memberships. Information about qualified providers, appropriate learning opportunities, and a common understanding of the potential uses of CEU in the meeting of recognition requirements simply have not been sufficiently available or widespread to this time for the development of meaningful recognition programs among users. As a consequence, there has been very little effort to date among users directed to the development of recognition programs that are based upon CEU in appropriate measure, along with other evidences of individual excellence.

Acceptance and use of CEU for recognition purposes in the consuming sector has lagged far behind that which has been happening on the supply side these past ten years. Witness the largely

voluntary effort expended initially by the task force. That work is now being carried on by the Council on the Continuing Education Unit. It is also being supported by a number of other active providers of continuing education which make their offerings available in the CEU mode while remaining apart from membership in this Council.

It is important to observe in this context that large-scale resources are not essential for the recognition purposes that CEU can serve. There is the example, for all to observe in this regard, that resources have been neither available nor required to date among the founders of the CEU and the many other providers which have adopted the norm as an added service to the groups they serve.

A Role for CEU Providers in Helping Others Build User Programs

The time is at hand for the providers of continuing education to take the missionary word about the use of CEU for recognition purposes to the vast world of user groups. There are untold missions of need in the near space of continuing education.

Many user groups can benefit from the counsel of experienced educators and learning psychologists in putting CEU to use in their respective recognition programs. Standards need to be established and curricula designed for all manner of user groups by means of which their respective memberships can participate in recognition programs that are based in substantial measure upon individual pursuit of continuing education. The CEU is the one common denominator

that can be used nationally for purposes of attesting to individual effort directed toward meritorious goals set by user groups.

Each provider of continuing education should offer to assist the various user groups it normally serves by lending counsel in the establishment of such educational parameters as:

1. Appropriate content, level, educational objective and formats of instruction for the particular group being served.
2. Evaluation measures applicable to individual performance, whether done in terms of improved skill or proficiency in the field or in terms of evidence of new knowledge acquisition or improved understanding and behavior.
3. By the same token, the provider should expect that some form of evaluation will be applied to its own organizational effort, instructional technique and degree of success in meeting the stated goals of the educational experience.
4. Meaningful rates of accumulation and the total number of CEU to be acquired over relatively short periods of time should be stated beforehand by each user group as a requirement for recognition to be conferred upon any of its members.

It is apparent that these several standards will vary to either side of given norms according to the needs of specific user groups. "Organ transplantation techniques" for surgeons differs markedly from the "tree transplantation techniques" that are essential for park and recreational facility managers. Important among the differences, once the principal parameters of audience, purpose and content, have been settled upon, are the

secondary characteristics of the program format, financial and staffing arrangements, siting and facilities selection, the requirements of demonstrated proficiency, etc. However, user groups in such widely separated categories of skill requirements and service sector responsibility as discussed above may measure with confidence the educational content of their respective learning experiences when expressed in CEU. It does not matter whether the respective participants in such disparate programs receive their CEU from the same or differing sources of sponsorship. All that does matter is: a) the learning involved and b) its pertinence to the educational, career and professional objectives of the diverse interest groups in the service of their respective sectors of society.

The providers of continuing education have a traditional role to fill in assisting with the establishment of the specific set of educational parameters that are applicable to each user group served in a great variety of settings and for an equal variety of purposes. These programs should specify significant aspects of the individual qualification for recognition in terms of the accumulation of CEU. That is to say, an individual record that is built in substantial part upon the basis of CEU must have some corresponding respectability and status within the eyes of academe. Failure to obtain this level of use and acceptance of continuing education where individual recognition is concerned then means that a large number of us are following careers that are essentially

without meaning. And worse than that, we appear to be deceiving the very clientele groups we claim to serve through our efforts and through whom we earn our livelihood in the conduct of continuing education opportunities in the guise of public service.

However, any given provider of continuing education should not expect to make all of the important determinations concerning the career development needs of the great many user groups served by that organization on a year-to-year basis. The level of demand and the changing pattern of need among its various constituencies are both immense and immensely variable quantities. Where the determination of merit is concerned, no single sponsoring organization or its educational and administrative personnel can rightfully expect to stay abreast of all such requirements. Consider the multiple array of provider organizations that is available to serve any particular need. No given organization or its teaching staff can expect to be the purveyor of all of the requisite learning experiences and self-development requirements over which the individual who seeks advancement within a chosen field of endeavor must demonstrate mastery.

Alternatives of Continued Inaction Are Unsatisfactory

The two principal and traditional alternatives to the CEU are recalled:

1. Do little or nothing at all toward facilitating recognition for specific clientele groups, including all of the conventional job skills, the major career fields and the professions.

2. Create highly individualized and localized programs of recognition that are based upon a unique combination of provider interests and capabilities in terms of serving a limited number of user groups and, I might add, each in a limited way.

The first alternative begs the total question of the purposes and conduct of continuing education. The second alternative leads almost certainly to programs that are not transferable, are not accumulative, and are not capable of ready comparison with similar programs in the same or closely related fields. Of more than 40 examples of the latter type of institutionalized programs once known to exist, for example, each had its unique terminology, clientele served, goals, form of recognition and institutional and faculty commitments. The systems of measurement and recognition applied to continuing education by these programs were based upon such diverse elements as "career points," "institutional endorsements," "professional credit," "professional degree," "certificate programs," "certificate credit," and various forms of "extension," "credit-free" and "noncredit" appellations.

Each of these choices of terminology existed as a separate star in the firmament. But we lacked the means, as it were, to journey from one such star to another or even to associate them into meaningful and identifiable groupings comparable to the constellations that have been recognized by all human societies throughout the course of civilization.

The further proliferation of these sundry concepts merely to include the new terminology of "continuing education units" as one

more such "star in the firmament" is no answer to the several administrative problems of:

1. The sole-source limitations that apply to the benefits that flow from such programs of unique character.

2. The certification or verification of individual records over time and place barriers.

3. The subsequent ability to compile and accumulate an individual record therefrom.

4. The variability of educational experiences required for the acquisition of specific skills from career to career.

5. The need for periodic updating in all fields of endeavor.

6. The inclusion of any number of worthy providers in a given matter of recognition by accepting the programs of outsiders to academia as contributors to the individual pattern of lifelong learning and development.

7. The basing of recognition on self-development and career performance factors other than or in addition to continuing education.

8. Service to all levels of postsecondary education.

9. Service to all career fields, in the here and now, and with the further prospect of being adaptable to the inevitable change that results from a half-life of more or less ten years that applies to most technological information and know-how at the current pace of development.

An answer to all of these vexing but not insurmountable problems does present itself, however, through the concept of a

continuing education unit as the "uniform measure" that it purports to be on a national basis. All that is needed is that the CEU be maintained sufficiently broad in its interpretation and use to fit all of these variable circumstances, career by career, year by year, and increment by increment of pertinent new knowledge. The provider of record simply has to show restraint in purporting to be the means to all such ends that the conduct of a wide spectrum of continuing education demands. In particular, the provider should avoid becoming involved in all of the potential aspects of a career pattern of development that contribute to eventual or periodic recognition that derive most appropriately from the user group of record.

Closure

It is particularly significant and important, however, that each user group that is served through continuing education sit in judgment, at the same time, of theusefulness of the CEU in every instance of its application among its constituents for recognition purposes. It is in this way that all of the special purpose programs and definitions in continuing education alluded to above can be served by this ingle, simple, modular concept of CEU. In short, this is the greatest potential of the highly flexible and universal CEU.

Under this scheme, the providers concerns themselves in the main with the development of the subject matter content and its orderly and skillful presentation along with the administrative controls that are necessary to achieve the intended purpose of

the learning experience. Each user group, on the other hand, concerns itself with the manner in which a particular offering serves the continuing education needs of its constituency. It is totally unrealistic to expect that all offerings serve all groups. It is just that simple and straightforward. The user or consuming group determines the end use, particularly in terms of the recognition that flows from the CEU of record. Even at that, the CEU must take its place among several other individual attributes and achievements that surely exist as further necessary conditions for the sought-after recognition or reward.

It is time now to get on with applications of the CEU that are built upon user aspirations. These modules of learning, namely CEU, can then begin to play a role in the design and administration of meaningful programs of recognition that are equally acceptable to providers, users, individual learners and society in general.

The CEU is "the new space vehicle" that makes "the universe of continuing education" more fully available for utilization. In the prior absence of the CEU as a highly adaptive and useful tool, that universe was diffuse, obscure, only vaguely comprehended and most difficult of meaningful navigation in the attainment of life's goals via participation in noncredit learning experiences. Now, however, all individuals and organizations who share a concern for career development are free to travel wherever they will throughout the universe of continuing education in the service of perceived needs. All manner of individuals and the careers to which they are committed are capable of being served simply by virtue of taking advantage of the widespread availability and utility of the CEU.

Despite the allegorical references to the CEU as the spaceship Columbia, the continuing education unit is not the vehicle of learning. Perhaps the learning opportunity, itself, fits that specification more closely. But the CEU is a substantive measure of the mission performance -- passive though it may be -- that makes it possible for all of society to judge individual accomplishment in the fulfillment of one's continuing education obligation. The CEU is the payload associated with the continuing education opportunity. The prime purpose in the imaginary space mission, as represented by participation in continuing education, is to combat obsolescence by gaining mastery over traditional knowledge and by maintaining pace with pertinent new knowledge.

Epilogue

What does all of this mean:

1. To the various individual careers as well as to the recognized progressions?
2. To the unique roles careers and professions play in a complex and changing society?
3. To the greater or lesser aspirations and qualifications of the respective memberships in all logical and natural groupings of societal endeavor?

It now becomes possible for all manner of national organizations and their constituent state association and local chapters, whether acting singly or in support of one another, to initiate meaningful programs of individual development that are based upon:

1. The accumulation of CEU from a variety of providers while remaining consistent with the broad educational content and objectives that have been developed by the national body or highest existing level of organization.

NOTE: This later function of overall design of an integrated educational program should be done in counsel with recognized providers, acknowledge sources of subject matter competence, licensing authorities, employers, outstanding educators, experts in motivation and other well-qualified persons in the psychology of learning. The latter two classes of specialists, in particular, are recommended for inclusion in the design of the continuing education component of recognition programs by virtue of the superior knowledge of testing and evaluation procedures.

2. The establishment of broadly based programs of career and avocational development involving not only CEU but such other manifestations as:

a) Increased or improved performance on the job.

b) Broad spectrum services to the advancement of the chosen career.

c) Demonstrated ability to perform at increasingly higher levels of responsibility consonant with the expectations of individuals and society at large that new leadership be consistently available and emergent from the cadres of practitioners in the given field.

3. Appropriate forms of recognition spaced throughout time and with each concurrent award being properly demonstrative of significant (or potential for) change in individual capability in the area of recognition. Thus, the individual member of any constituent organization or in the service of a public or private user group might be recognized for:

a) Technical competence and demonstrated proficiency therein.

b) Leadership attributes, capacity for growth, successful discharge of responsibilities, etc.

c) Singular contributions to the chosen career, such as patents, papers, presentations, etc.

d) Community or public services of a significant nature.

e) Earned respect among peers.

f) The evaluated record in continuing education.

4. Needless to say, all possible combinations of the several elements of a career and avocational development program, as outlined under Item 3, above, may be designed into a single, thoughtful, meaningful individual development program that is largely unique to each specific user group, regardless of its nature.

5. At the same time, such a program should be comparable to the recognition programs of relatively comparable organizations in the hierarchy of the careers and professions that occupy a similar place in the image, respect and esteem that are bestowed by the public upon various practitioners. Points of similarity should deal with scope, level of difficulty and demonstrated evidence of changed behavior.

6. Notice, too, that the concept of an integrated program of continuing education properly belongs to the user group being served and not to a particular sponsor among the many that might contribute in the servicing of that need.

7. It is safe to predict that <u>proficiency by examination</u> will eventually become more universally applied than it has been in the past. It is not expected that such examinations will become the exclusive province of the traditional providers of continuing education any more so than they have been the exclusive province of schools of medicine, law or engineering for the licensure of would-be professionals in these respective fields.

8. Indeed, employers of all kind may prefer to use established psychological and educational testing services, as well as their own substantial resources, for the determination of individual knowledge pertinent to the needs and concerns of that employer.

9. Membership organizations that are interested in attesting to the competency of their own clientele, as well as seeking greater public esteem for their contribution to society, may do so by an internal program of monitoring and evaluating individual progress rather than depending upon the uncertain and variable quality of the evaluations performed by the multiple and diverse providers of record.

A Postcript

The CEU is to continuing education as the sand in an hour-glass is to the observation of events that occur in real time. Let us not confuse the simply flowing mechanism of measurement, the CEU, with that which takes place in the real time that transpires during the course of the learning experience that is being so measured.

The substantive aspects of continuing education -- so diverse, so rich in potential and with all of its capability for updating and broadening individuals in key areas of need -- is broader and more valuable by orders of magnitude than anything, or everything, that can be said about the simple measure of such participation in learning that is, the CEU.

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Madison, Wisconsin
May 19, 1981